

## CLAIMS

What I claim as my invention is:

1. A method and apparatus for detecting new ideas in symbolic representations of domains of endeavor or fields of study, hereinafter referred to as domains, comprising:

a process, hereinafter referred to as bootstrapping, for initially lexiconizing all words and symbols in a domain;

a process, hereinafter referred to as fad detection, for examining one or more second collections of words and/or symbols occurring in a domain and comparing all words and/or symbols in said collections with the bootstrapped or its augmented lexicon;

a process, hereinafter referred to as category detection, for searching one or more third collections of words and/or symbols and detecting occurrences of previously detected fad words and collecting their associated fiducial data;

a process for computing metrics which are indicative of spatial or temporal spread of fads using the fiducial data associated with occurrences of fads in said third collection of words and/or symbols; and,

a process for interacting with a user for the entry of parameters and output of data produced by the various processes.

2. A method and apparatus as in claim 1 wherein the symbolic representations of a domain are the contents of an internet web site.

3. A method and apparatus as in claim 1 in which the symbolic representations of a domain are the contents of transcripts of verbal communications.

4. A method and apparatus as in claim 1 in which the symbolic representations of a domain are written communications.

5. A method and apparatus as in claim 1 in which the bootstrap process is replaced with a non-domain specific lexicon.

6. A method and apparatus as in claim 1 in which a process for interacting with a user utilizes a web browser.

7. A method and apparatus for detecting new ideas by lexiconizing symbols in a first set of data and detecting new ideas by the occurrence of new symbols in an augmented first set of data or a second set of data.

8. A method and apparatus for detecting new ideas in communications between or among individuals by lexiconizing symbols in a first set of communications and detecting new ideas by the occurrence of new symbols in subsequent communications.

9. A method and apparatus as in claim 8 in which communications are manually or automatically transcribed into symbolic form.

10. A method and apparatus as in claim 8 in which communications are comprised of transcriptions of non-verbal communications or patterns of behavior into a machine readable form.